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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BEIJING 002864

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TAGS: PHUM PTER PREL PGOV KIRF KOLY CH
SUBJECT: XINJIANG RESIDENTS CONFIRM PRE-OLYMPICS RAIDS,
EXECUTIONS

REF: BEIJING 2414

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Aubrey Carlson. Reasons 1.
4 (b/d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Xinjiang residents confirmed Western press reports of a public execution of three alleged separatists in a closed city near Kashgar July 9. Posters announcing the executions in both Uighur and Mandarin were posted in multiple locations in Kashgar, as well as in two other cities in southern Xinjiang, and featured photos of the three accused men with red X's over their faces. One resident said that the executions and the surrounding subsequent publicity are an attempt by the Chinese Government to scare Uighur residents in advance of the Olympics, an opinion seconded by a Beijing-based expert. Checkpoints and other evidence of heightened pre-Olympics security remain present throughout Xinjiang, although police denied that they are implementing a general "strike hard" policy against local residents. In Urumqi, residents confirmed that a police raid on an alleged terrorist den resulted in several deaths. End Summary.

Residents Reluctant to Talk

¶2. (C) PolOffs traveled to Xinjiang July 17-21 and gathered information through discreet and informal conversations with local residents. Most of the local residents PolOffs spoke with refused to comment on recent crackdowns and were visibly nervous when questioned on the subject.

Public Execution near Kashgar

¶3. (C) Xinjiang residents willing to discuss the issue confirmed media reports of an ongoing Chinese Government campaign against "extremist elements." Several Kashgar residents provided accounts similar to media reports (notably Washington Post correspondent Ed Cody's July 18 report) of the public execution of three suspected separatists by firing squad July 9 in Yengi Sheher, a military garrison town 12 kilometers from Kashgar. In Yengi Sheher, a real estate saleswoman told PolOffs that the executions took place at the Qilu Industrial Park (Qilu Gongye Yuan) and were open to both Han and Uighur residents. While no one PolOff spoke to had attended the execution, many of the people PolOffs spoke with in Yengi Sheher confirmed the location and date.

Executions Publicized

¶4. (C) Details of the three executed individuals, including names, ages, ethnicity, hometowns and the alleged crimes of "attempting to split the nation, leading a terrorist organization and the illegal manufacture of explosives," were displayed on large posters hung in multiple locations throughout Kashgar in both Uighur and Mandarin languages,

including two locations in the Uighur-dominated old town near the central Id Kah Mosque square. The posters featured photographs of the faces of the three people executed, each covered with a red X. The final poster, bearing the official stamp of the head of the Kashgar Intermediate People's Court, stated that the "Supreme People's Court approved the death penalty ruling of Abduweli Imin, Muktar Setiwaldi and Ahmeti Rehman in accordance with the death penalty review procedure." The concluding line reads, "On July 9, 2008, a meeting for the public pronouncement of verdict was convened in Shule County. The guilt of the above three convicted criminals was proven through examination. They were escorted to the execution grounds and executed by firing squad!" (Note: The Chinese version of the poster concludes with an exclamation point, while the Uighur version uses a period. The posters appear to be otherwise identical.)

Public Announcement of 60 "Criminals" Punished

¶ 15. (C) In addition to information on the three publicly executed criminals, the poster gives biodata on three other executed criminals as well as on 54 other people charged with lesser crimes. All 60 people listed on the poster are ethnic Uighurs, and the charges are primarily related to separatism and terrorist activities. A Uighur restaurant owner in Yengi Sheher, where the executions took place, claimed to know one of the 54 criminals listed on the poster charged with lesser crimes. According to the poster, she was sentenced to 17 years in prison for separatist activities and three years for belonging to a terrorist organization, with loss of political rights for an additional five years. According to the

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restaurant owner, her actual crime was defacing a Chinese flag, which the police interpreted as a statement in support of separatism. He added that she could have escaped punishment by bribing appropriate officials, but she lacked the money. In a separate conversation, a Uighur tour guide named Nur (strictly protect) strongly disagreed, saying that in the current heightened pre-Olympics environment, neither bribery nor connections (guanxi) are helpful in avoiding punishments or detention.

Killing the Chickens to Scare the Monkeys

¶ 16. (C) PolOffs observed the posters about the alleged criminals in Kashgar, as well as in the cities of Yengisar (Mandarin: Yingjisha, an hour and a half from Kashgar) and Yarkand (Shache, three and a half hours from Kashgar). The restaurant owner in Yengi Sheher noted that the executions were intended "just to scare us." Li Sheng (strictly protect), Director of the Research Center for China's Borderland History and Geography Studies at the State Council-affiliated Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) in Beijing, told PolOffs July 18 that although he was not aware of the reported public sentencing, he did not doubt the reports were true, as authorities have taken such measures in the past. Li cited a public sentencing carried out following the Gulja (Mandarin: Yining) riots in 1997, which he surmised anywhere from "several to ten thousand" people attended. The Government takes such measures to "demonstrate its might" to the "terrorists" and to discourage other "terrorists" from challenging the Government before the Olympics, he said. "Just look at the date, July 9," observed Li, asserting that executions almost exactly one month before the opening of the Beijing Olympic Games represent a pre-Olympics "warning." Li said that this is a "Chinese method" of control, which "Westerners would have difficulty understanding."

Artush Police on Security

¶ 17. (C) Evidence of the pre-Olympics heightened security

environment is widespread in Xinjiang. Residents in Urumqi and Kashgar complained that tightened visa policies and security measures reduced the number of foreign visitors to the region. Checkpoints, reported reftel, remain in place between all cities visited, and the identification cards of both Han and Uighur residents were checked at each point.

(Note: PolOffs, both Caucasian, were not asked for ID at checkpoints.) One PolOff was delayed for 20 minutes by the police in Artush (Mandarin: Atushi) while his passport and visa were checked. After ascertaining that PolOff was not a journalist, a police official said that Artush "welcomes foreign tourists" but the police must check the documents of all foreigners they meet. The police are only obligated to check the documents of locals "engaged in suspicious activity," which they clarified as "doing things alone" or "doing subversive things." The police official denied a general "strike hard" policy is being implemented against locals (as the Uighur Human Rights Project alleged in a July 18 press statement), saying that the "strike hard policy only applies to criminals" and not to the general public. The police official asked for understanding upon returning PolOff's documents, noting that in the pre-Olympics period, such stringent checks are necessary "for your safety."

Rumors in Kashgar: Beards Outlawed?

¶ 18. (C) Kashgar residents reported rumors of a new law prohibiting young men from growing beards but noted that the elderly and members of the Islamic clergy are exempt from the law. An indignant Uighur tour guide said that growing a beard is punishable by withholding of salary. The Uighur restaurant owner in Yengi Sheher lamented the poverty of his home district, noting that all he has is his religion, and the Chinese Government is seeking to restrict even that by disallowing beards.

Urumqi Terrorist Den Raid Confirmed

¶ 19. (C) In Urumqi, residents confirmed a July 8 police raid on an alleged hideout of fifteen members of a "jihad training group." Residents pinpointed the site of the raid as the Chenguang Huayuan, a sleepy and relatively upscale apartment complex on the outskirts of Urumqi. Residents and local shopkeepers confirmed that "an incident" had occurred in which guns were fired, resulting in several deaths. The

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press reported five people dead, while one resident claimed that seven were killed. Residents insisted that the incident was isolated, that the neighborhood is still safe and that the area is not known for or conducive to terrorism. Children of both Han and Uighur ethnicity were playing unaccompanied, and elderly residents were outside the complex playing Mahjongg.
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